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### Keys to Buymanship: Shoes

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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—keys to buymanship—

# SHOES

Cooperative Extension Service

South Dakota State University

United States Department of Agriculture



# shoes

By Elizabeth K. Easton, extension clothing specialist

It takes twenty years to grow a foot and by that time more than three-fourths of the population suffers from some kind of foot trouble. One authority says that the trouble with feet is shoes—and sometimes stockings or socks that don't fit!

Shoes are not a long-term investment, but a pair of feet must last a lifetime. Therefore, it is impossible to over-stress the importance of properly fitted footwear. The average person lives in shoes about two-thirds of each day, and in a lifetime may walk about 250,000 miles. Walking is actually a rolling motion. It goes from the outside edge of the heel diagonally forward to the ball of the foot and across to the base of the little toe.

Three measurements insure that the shoe will properly support these weight-bearing points of the foot:

**Toe length**—entire length of foot from heel to toe, designated by number.

**Foot width**—at the widest part, designated by letters.

**Arch length**—from heel to the ball of the foot.

Arch length is not designated and may differ for feet with the same toe length. Arch length is very important and must be interpreted by a trained salesperson. However, the wearer also can judge the correct length as accurately as the less well-trained salesperson. An arch that is too short robs the foot of support necessary to balance body weight, it pinches nerves, cramps and twists toes, and reduces ventilation. A too-long arch allows the foot to sag and also may result in pinched nerves.

## PENALTIES OF POOR FIT

1. Enlarged toe joints and bunions.
2. Ingrown toenails.
3. Poor circulation.
4. Excessive perspiration, causing rotting of inner-soles, linings and uppers.
5. Foot diseases, caused by excess moisture and poor ventilation.

## COMFORT AND FIT

Walking is good exercise—do it in comfortable shoes. No matter how great the quality built into it, a

shoe that does not fit is worthless. Properly fitted shoes give greater comfort and wear better. Check these points for comfort and fit:

1. Try on shoes when feet are rested.
2. Have both feet measured while standing, each time shoes are bought. If feet differ in size, fit the larger one.
3. Check the width. The shoe should be wide enough for all the toes to rest on the sole. While standing it should be possible to pinch a small crease in the shoe upper across the ball of the foot with the thumb and forefinger.
4. Check the length—from heel to ball of foot, and from heel to toe. The widest part of the shoe should correspond to the ball of the foot. There should be enough space between the end of the toes and the end of the shoe for the toes to lie flat. The big toe should be free to move easily when one is standing.
5. The shoe should fit firmly under the arch. It should feel “supporting.”
6. The heel should fit snugly but comfortably.
7. Shoe and foot should bend together.
8. The vamp should fit easily without buckling or cutting.
9. Shoe should hug the foot, but not cut into it.
10. When shopping for new shoes wear your best fitting shoes, so you can make comparisons.
11. Correctly fitted shoes should be comfortable from the beginning and should require no “breaking in.”
12. Avoid “handed-down” shoes.

## LET THE OLD SHOE TELL YOU SOMETHING

Studying old or worn out shoes can give valuable clues to correct fit. The old shoe was:

### Too short, if

wear is distributed unevenly over the sole, tip shows excessive wear, toes are curled, heels push under, or, new lifts are needed frequently.

### Too narrow, if

uppers bulge over the sole, or edges of soles show excessive wear.



### **Too tight, if**

lining has worn pockets for toes.

### **Too short from heel to ball of foot, if**

shoe is puckered,  
wrinkled behind ball of foot, wear shows behind  
the ball of the foot or the sole.

Soles and/or heels worn along the inside edge or unnaturally bulging uppers indicate a weak arch.

### **HOSIERY IS IMPORTANT, TOO!**

Socks and stockings that are too short can do as much damage as shoes that fit poorly. Full length hosiery needs to be comfortably long in the leg and foot lengths should extend one-half inch beyond the longest toe.

### **SHOP FOR QUALITY**

#### **Construction**

Shoes consist of an outsole, (bottom) insole, upper, and heel. The insole, of leather or other materials, forms the foundation of the shoe. The front part of the upper is the vamp. The back part is the quarter. The counter, a stiffened material between quarter and lining, keeps the back in shape.

Shoemaking is a complex process. All shoes are made over lasts—wooden forms, which give the shoe its shape, size, and style. More than 50 kinds of materials and over 85 hand and machine operations are used to make a shoe. **Stitched, cemented, and nailed** are names of three major shoemaking processes.

Welt shoes, made without stitching inside, are sturdy, flexible and of high quality. In the stitch-down process, uppers are turned out and stitched directly to the outsole. This provides a smooth inner surface resembling that of the welt process. Nailing is a process used to make men's heavy work shoes.

Cemented shoes are light in weight, flexible, and available in a wide variety of styles.

Almost all rubber-canvas footwear is made by a vulcanizing process. By applying heat and pressure to an unvulcanized rubber mixture, a complete sole and heel are formed and permanently attached to the upper.

In the injection-molded process, a liquid vinyl is poured into a mold shaped like the finished product. Sole and heel are then quickly attached to the finished upper.

Many grades of shoes are made with the same method of construction, depending upon the type and quality of material used. Shoes are made from almost everything, although leather, the tanned skin of an animal, is the traditional material. Leather is attractive, tough, durable, flexible, retains its shape, has insulating qualities, the ability to absorb and pass off moisture, and "breathability." A new tanning proc-

ess using glutaraldehyde makes leather more resistant to water, sweat, acids, and alkalis. Use of other chemicals provide scuff and water resistance and generally improve wear.

Since 1964 many new man-made materials for shoe uppers have been introduced. In general, the classes of new materials are poromeric, expanded, and non-expanded vinyls. Poromeric refers to a permeable, leather-like sheet material made of a group of chemical compounds. *Corfam* (trade name) is an example. Some feet are highly sensitive to vinyl-type shoe materials.

Expanded vinyl is a plastic sheet with tiny air cells evenly spaced in it to allow passage of air. *Pervil* (trade name) is an example.

Non-expanded vinyl may be described as a flat sheet coated with vinyl to resemble patent leather.

Also new are vinyl and fabric uppers bonded to cowhide splits (hides horizontally cut into layers).

When buying new shoes, examine the edge trim of the shoe. Shoes of good quality have smooth, clean sole edges. Also examine the "break" of leather uppers at the ball of the shoe. "Break" refers to the tiny wrinkles which form on the outer surface when you bend the leather. Many fine wrinkles per inch denote high-quality leather. Shoes should be designed to provide toe height at the tip of the shoe sufficient for comfort to the wearer.

#### **Linings**

Because much of the actual construction of a shoe is hidden, shoe quality is difficult to judge. One point of visible construction that can be checked as a guide to quality is the lining. It should be smooth and free from wrinkles. Seam edges should be smooth and stitching should be even with no loose threads.

Linings for shoes may be all-leather, all-fabric, or a combination of leather and fabric. Good quality fabric linings are closely woven and are treated specially to resist growth of bacteria and fungi. Linings treated with an anti-bacterial process will last longer and are more odor free. Leather linings usually wear longer. There are also durable, synthetic leather-like linings.

#### **Soles**

Soles of good quality are flexible and sufficiently porous to allow for evaporation of perspiration, yet have enough resistance to moisture to keep the feet dry. Rubber or plastic soles may wear well but usually are not porous, making leather a better choice.

#### **Labeling**

The increased number and variety of leather substitutes used in shoe construction has resulted in a



Federal Trade Commission regulation of labeling and advertising leather goods.

Under this ruling the true composition of the sole, insole, sock lining, upper, lining and counter must be stated if the shoe looks like leather. Split, shredded, simulated or imitation leathers must be so labeled.

#### GIVE SHOES GOOD CARE

1. **Clean regularly**—never polish over dirt.
2. **Give shoes a day of rest** between wearing.
3. **Dry wet shoes** away from heat.
4. **Keep heels and soles in good repair.**



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**SHOES**